



**CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
CREEKS RESTORATION/WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES**

SPECIAL MEETING

September 16, 2009

CASA LAS PALMAS, 323 E. CABRILLO BOULEVARD

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Moldaver called the meeting to order at 5:31pm.

ROLL CALL

Committee members present: Chair Moldaver, Paul Bullock, Michael Jordan, Natasha Lohmus, Roger Schlueter, Daniel Wilson

Committee members absent: None

Liaison members present: None

Liaison members absent: Councilmember Iya Falcone, Park and Recreation Commissioner Daniel Hochman, Planning Commissioner John Jostes

Staff present: Creeks Restoration/Clean Water Manager Cameron Benson, Creeks Supervisor George Johnson, Creeks Program Assistant Liz Smith

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion:

Committee members Jordan/Wilson to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of July 15, 2009.

Vote:

Unanimous voice vote.

Motion:

Committee members Jordan/Bullock to approve the minutes of the site visit of August 12, 2009.

Vote:

Unanimous voice vote.

AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No one wished to speak.

COMMITTEE MEMBER AND STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Schlueter asked whether the Committee can appoint a new Budget Subcommittee member to replace Mr. Weber.

Mr. Moldaver suggested that the Committee appoint a replacement at the October meeting, and noted that a new Vice Chair will be appointed as well.

Mr. Jordan asked whether the Upper Las Positas Creek Restoration and Storm Water Management Project is still expected to be completed in November; and, suggested another site visit before the time change at the end of October.

Mr. Benson reported that the project is still on schedule to be completed in November; and, that the Golf Division intends to do a tour and large event once the project is complete, but that a site visit can be scheduled separately from regular meetings.

Mr. Wilson suggested waiting to take another tour until the rainy season begins in order to see water moving through the system.

Mr. Moldaver reminded the Committee that Creek Week will begin on Saturday, September 19th; and, asked whether Jane Gray will be holding a Proposition 84 meeting in Goleta this week.

Mr. Benson reported that the meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 23rd.

7. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Fiscal Years 2011 – 2016 Proposed Capital Program

Recommendation:

That the Committee receive a presentation on the proposed Creeks Division Capital Program for Fiscal Years 2011 – 2016 and provide feedback on the approach and funding allocations. The Committee will have the opportunity to make recommendations to City Council on the proposed capital program in February 2010.

Documents:

Staff Report – September 2009

Speakers:

Cameron Benson, Creeks Restoration/Clean Water Manager

Committee Questions/Discussion:

Mr. Jordan noted that while the Committee had discussed and approved using Measure B funds to fund 100% of the Upper Las Positas Creek Restoration and Storm Water Management Project, the project is now more than 50% grant funded.

Committee members asked questions regarding placement of items in the capital budget versus the operating budget; projected reserve balance; the status of the Old Mission Creek at West Figueroa restoration project; whether interest is earned on capital funds; and, expressed concern regarding other entities wanting to use unappropriated Measure B funds.

Mr. Benson reported that by keeping items in the capital budget, funds will accrue over time and roll over each year, versus the operating budget where funds left unspent at the end of each fiscal year are placed in the Creeks Division reserve; that staff expects the reserve balance to remain at approximately \$2.5 - \$3 million, and that the revenue forecast is updated by the Finance Department every two months; that the Old Mission Creek at West Figueroa project has been taken through 30% design and is now on hold, and that staff wants to see how the Upper Las Positas Creek project performs because it will incorporate many of the same principles in terms of treatment and effectiveness; that interest is accrued on the reserve balance as well as unspent capital funds; and, that approximately 8% of Measure B funds already go toward street sweeping, and if funds begin going elsewhere, the Creeks Division capital program will have to be scaled back, and that at a future meeting the Committee will discuss and revisit the funding guidelines that were approved by Council in 2003.

Committee members asked questions regarding a mechanism for providing funding for private landowners or non-governmental entities to receive funding for creek restoration projects; and, Mr. Wilson noted that the majority of our watersheds are privately owned and any opportunity to partner with landowners should be taken.

Mr. Benson reported that the Creeks Division is not necessarily a grant making agency and would not be able to simply fund a project, but would have to take on oversight of the project, including design, analysis, and a public bidding process, but that staff is open to project suggestions.

Mr. Johnson noted that if a neighborhood came to an agreement as a unit and wanted to restore a large section of the creek it might be feasible and effective.

Committee members asked whether biological assessments are done before projects are ranked; whether there is flexibility in funding, for example if there are debris issues following the local fires; and, how long it would take to appropriate reserve funds for a new project.

Mr. Benson reported that biological assessments are done, and that the presence of endangered species may increase project costs, but that it can also increase eligibility for grant funding that may not be available

otherwise; that Measure B was not intended to fund things the City would be doing normally, for instance if a creek is plugged, Public Works has always addressed that, and they still would, but that if a Creeks Division project site were dramatically affected such as debris flows taking plants off creek banks, the Creeks Division would replant the site; and, that it would take a few months to appropriate funds for a project, assuming there was no permitting or design work to be done, but that for smaller projects such as a \$10,000 planting project, it could be as quick as two to three weeks.

Committee members asked questions regarding the potential use of County Flood Control or Public Works mitigation funds; whether all of the storm drains in the City will have screens installed; the location of the Las Positas Valley Restoration; whether staff is proposing removing the concrete culvert along Las Positas Road; and, the location of the Lower Arroyo Burro Restoration.

Mr. Benson reported that the use of mitigation funds presents interesting questions, but that it is a larger, separate policy discussion, and means that someone is damaging a creek somewhere else; that screens will be installed throughout the City, but not on CalTrans property, and that there are some other situations such as where the concrete is in bad shape and the contractor is not comfortable drilling into it; that the Las Positas Valley Restoration could include work below Modoc Road and the train tracks, potential bioswale work and additional treatment below the freeway; that staff is not proposing removal of the culvert along Las Positas Road until the Upper Las Positas Creek project is observed through the rainy season, and that removal of some of the culvert may be a possibility, but that significant outreach to property owners will take place first; and, that the Lower Arroyo Burro project may include six City owned acres along the creek along Arroyo Burro near Cliff Drive, or a restoration at Hidden Valley Park.

Public Comment:

Mr. Moldaver noted that staff received an email from Brian Trautwein of the Environmental Defense Center expressing support of the proposed capital program, and expressing his preference for restoration rather than end-of-pipe treatment facilities.

Committee Questions/Discussion:

Committee members asked whether there are plans to install more facilities that divert storm water to the sewer; and, Ms. Lohmus noted that there may be a problem with the Laguna Watershed project due to the presence of pond turtles.

Mr. Benson reported that staff does not currently intend to install more diversions, although the possibility at the San Pascual drain is still open, and that in cases such as the Laguna Watershed project staff is moving forward with a UV treatment facility, and looking at doing treatment at low flows only; and, that there is already a collection system pumping unfiltered water out to the beach, where staff intends to add the treatment mechanism to the existing facility, so there will not be a new hazard to the turtles.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion:

Committee members Jordan/Bullock to adjourn.

Chair Moldaver adjourned the meeting at 7:25pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Cameron Benson
Creeks Restoration/Clean Water Manager